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TRENDS IN REGIONAL INFORMATION EXCHANGE*

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I. Introduction

Regional Information Exchange on technology transfer agreements have received increased attention and various regional networks have been established. The growing importance can be traced to the realization that common languages, similar industrial development pattern, cultural/historical ties etc. are important elements to ensure a successful information exchange network. TIES has been established as a global network to be beneficial for all institutions involved on the basis that the information exchanged should be valuable to all. To ensure compatibility with regional efforts UNIDO in proposing that the information exchanged through TIES at the TIES IIM level, is considered the core information of both TIES and regional networks.

II. Cooperation TIES/Technological Information Network of Latin America (RITLA)

As recommended by the Ninth Meeting of Heads of Technology Transfer Registries a meeting has been organized in January 1985 between the Secretariat of TIES and RITLA. The principal objective of this meeting was to agree on a modus-operandi for a cooperation taking into consideration the similar mandates of both UNIDO and RITLA in the Latin America region in this field of activity.

It was agreed, subject to written confirmation by the RITLA Secretariat that, in accordance with the conclusion contained in para 10 of the report of the Ninth Meeting of Heads of Technology Transfer Registries, RITLA will review the proposed levels of information exchange on technology transfer agreements (TIES I, TIES IIM, TIES IIA, TIES IIB) and inform UNIDO of any changes to be incorporated in the final format acceptable to RITLA, SAIT and other regional organizations.

In accordance with para 12 of the report of the First Latin American Meeting of Heads of Technology Transfer Registries, RITLA will do its best to facilitate the cooperation of all RITLA member countries in TIES, taking note that Argentina and Venezuela are already participating directly in TIES.

Considering that the lack of skilled people in information handling may hamper the organization of technological information flows among developing countries and recognizing the increasing tendency to introduce advanced technologies in information handling, it is agreed by both organizations to establish a comprehensive joint training programme in the area of technological information handling. A detailed outline of such a training programme will be prepared and a financial organization will be approached for their support.

Observing that there exists no systematic collecting and exchanging of technologies available from developing countries and having assessed UNIDO's pilot project proposal on information exchange on technologies available from Latin America to the dairy sector as a valuable contribution towards the development of a methodology and mechanism for such information exchange, it was agreed that the experience of RITLA in the technological information exchange in specific sections (tropical wood, food processing, etc.) will be a valuable contribution factor for this pilot project and that its execution will therefore be implemented in close coordination with RITLA.

This cooperation agreement will be subject to an annual review which will be held simultaneous with the annual meeting of Latin America Heads of Technology Transfer Registers.

So far no confirmation of this agreement has been received from the RITLA Secretariat and it must be concluded that from an operational view point the RITLA/TIES cooperation is now existent.

III. TIES/SAIT Cooperation

A common SAIT/TIES format in Spanish for information exchange on technology transfer agreement was agreed upon and a Spanish coding manual was prepared. The joint SAIT/TIES coding manual contains the TIES IIB information set supplemented with information specifically required for SAIT information exchange proposal.

In order to use the existing computerized information exchange processing facilities and pending modifications of the TIES coding form to include all the TIES/SAIT information fields, it has been decided that only the TIES IIB part of the SAIT/TIES format is processed at UNIDO Headquarters according to the following information exchange procedures.

1) SAIT/TIES focal points complete SAIT/TIES coding forms on a half yearly basis and forward them to UNIDO.

2) UNIDO processes the TIES IIB part of the SAIT/TIES coding forms and will make printouts for distribution to the SAIT/TIES focal points and the SAIT Secretariat.

3) UNIDO will process the complete TIES/SAIT coding forms once the processing facilities at UNIDO Headquarters have been adapted to the new TIES coding form.

Further areas of cooperation have been identified however financial constraints have prevented so far to implement their potential cooperative activities. These activities included among others:

1) Organization of three training seminars on evaluation of technology transfer agreements in Brazil, Mexico and Argentina in order to share experiences of these countries for a duration of two weeks.

2) Active support of the SAIT Secretariat to the analysis on commercialization of software through the contribution of a country summary of each Andean country which would include national policies, number and type of software contracts registered, payments authorized for such contracts.

3) Information exchange on technologies available in the Latin American Region for commercialization.

IV. TIES/African TIES Cooperation

The inaugural meeting of the Pilot Project on Technological Information Exchange System (AFRICA TIES), organized jointly by the African Regional Centre for Technology (ARCT) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) was held in Dakar, Senegal, from 1st to 3rd October 1985.

The objective of the meeting was to discuss the modalities of setting up AFRICA TIES and to draw up a detailed plan of action as well as the resource requirements for its implementation.

The meeting was attended by representatives of Cameroon, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Senegal and Tunisia.

African participation in TIES has not been encouraging owing to the kinds of technological information required by the network and the conditions stipulated for participation. But TIES has made positive contributions (by way of assistance it gives) to national institutions and enterprises while negotiating technological agreements. This justifies the decision to regionalize TIES activities.

The meeting decided that the focus of AFRICA TIES should be their priority sectors set within the framework of the Lagos Plan of Action. The exchange of information among African countries would cover the terms and conditions of technological acquisition broadly as well as the financial, legal, and technical aspects of technology transfer.

At the national level, a focal point would be identified for co-ordinating technological information and for participating in the activities of the network; while at the regional level, the ARCT would be the focal point for AFRICA TIES. ARCT would therefore take the lead in coordinating activities of the national focal points at the regional level. UNIDO as well as other interested organizations would be requested to support the ARCT in its efforts to set up and coordinate the network.

The project would start functioning at first with the countries that participated in this inaugural meeting and other selected countries (Algeria, Ivory Coast, Egypt, Kenya, Zimbabwe) which would be contacted by ARCT to confirm their intention to participate.

ARCT and UNIDO would constitute the Co-ordinating Committee for the network to follow-up, monitor and evaluate its activities of the network.

Meetings of the network will be held every year alternatively among participating countries.

V. TIES/ASTIS Cooperation

A regional project of the Governments of Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines and Brunei on Information Exchange System for Technology Transfer in ASEAN countries has been approved.

The basic objective of the project is to create communication links for the exchange of information on technology transfer through licensing agreements and joint ventures with foreign partners in the form of the ASEAN Technology Information System (ASTIS). Participating countries will be able through such a regional system to exchange information on payments, onorous conditions and availability of technology in their countries if they are faced with negotiations of technology agreements and gain access also to the information available with TIES and INTIB on technology acquired on conditions negotiated by non-Asean countries.

The output of the projects consists mainly of a stock-taking of facilities available in individual Asean countries for handling technology information, a framework for cooperation, a manual of operation of ASTIS, recommendations for the computerization of the system (hardware and software), a workshop for instruction of staff of national focal points, training of officials in more advanced technology registries in other countries and participation of officials in regular UNIDO TIES meetings. First coordinators' meeting has been scheduled to take place on 28-29 November 1985.